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Items for information: industrial statistics

Industrial statistics

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report was prepared at the request of the Statistical Commission at its thirty-seventh session. The report, for information, describes work carried out in the context of the work programme on industrial statistics. The Commission is requested to take note of the report.

* E/CN.3/2007/1.

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I. Recommendations made by the Statistical Commission

1. At its thirty-seventh session, held from 7 to 10 March 2006,[1] the Statistical Commission:

(a) Requested the United Nations Statistics Division to prepare a position paper on the recommendations made by the programme reviewer on industrial statistics, describing institutional arrangements, deliverables, timetables and consequences of implementing the recommendations;

(b) Noted that the integration of industrial statistics with other statistics, such as services statistics, needed to be improved in that process, and supported the creation of an integrated economic statistics programme and, as a first step, proposed the preparation of a concept paper for further discussion under item 3 (c) of the agenda.

2. At the same session, the Statistical Commission recommended also the establishment of a Friends of the Chair Group, consisting of Member States and international organizations, to prepare a concept paper on the modalities of the integrated approach to economic statistics, including the feasibility of establishing a mechanism for improving coordination among international organizations and work groups engaged in economic statistics.

II. Actions taken

3. A Friends of the Chair Group for the integrated approach to economic statistics has been created. The final recommendations of this Group may include elements of industrial statistics and institutional arrangements for such data collection among international agencies.

4. Work of the United Nations Statistics Division has progressed on existing components of industrial statistics, as described in the report of the programme reviewer.

A. Revision of the international recommendations for industrial statistics

5. The proposals for revision of the international recommendations for industrial statistics were discussed in the meeting of the expert group on industrial statistics. The United Nations Statistics Division prepared a draft annotated outline of the revised international recommendations based on the recommendations of that meeting and sent it for a peer review to members of the expert group. Suggestions received from members would be taken into account in drafting the revised international recommendations which will have the following provisional chapters:

I. Scope of industrial statistics

II. Statistical and reporting units

III. Data items and their definitions

[1] *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 2006, Supplement No. 4* (E/2006/24).

IV. Performance indicators

V. Data sources and data compilation methods

VI. Data collection

VII. Dissemination

6. The work on drafting the international recommendations will continue in close collaboration with the members of the expert group and some national statistics offices. Efforts will be made so that the revised recommendations are consistent and harmonized, to the extent possible, with international statistical standards issued by other international organizations and inter-agency task forces (e.g., the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, Eurostat, the International Labour Organization and the International Monetary Fund).

7. With a view to soliciting cooperation and promoting transparency in formulating the revised recommendations, the draft international recommendations shall be widely circulated to national statistics offices and international agencies for comments. After revising the draft in the light of the comments received, it will be discussed by the expert group for finalization before it is presented to the Statistical Commission for adoption in 2008.

B. Revision of the manual on index numbers of industrial production

8. The revision of the manual on index numbers of industrial production has further progressed with the drafting of a detailed outline and core chapters of the manual, based on the recommendations of the meeting of the expert group held in December 2005.

9. The United Nations Statistics Division is also preparing a survey on country practices for the collection and calculation of volume indices. The results of this survey will provide background on best practices in the manual.

10. A more detailed draft of the manual will be considered at an upcoming meeting of the expert group.

C. Industrial classifications

11. The core classifications used in industrial statistics, namely the International Standard Industrial Classification of All Economic Activities (ISIC) and the Central Product Classification (CPC), have recently been revised. The new versions provide better tools for describing economic activities in the industrial sector, in particular for manufacturing.

12. As part of the ISIC and CPC implementation process, the application of these classifications in industrial censuses and surveys will be supported.

D. Industrial commodity production statistics

13. The revised list of industrial products was successfully introduced in the last round of data collection on commodity production. The revised list is based on a

selection of products that are more relevant to manufacturing industries today. The product definitions are better aligned with existing product classifications, which should make it easier for countries to link them to nationally used product lists and provide a better tool for users who are interested in linking, for example, production and trade.

14. The response rate to the last questionnaire was higher than in previous years, indicating a better acceptance of the new product list.

15. In the latest round, data were not only collected in physical units, as in the past, but also in terms of monetary value. That should further enhance the usefulness of the data and allow for better integration with other industrial statistics components.

16. After a transition period, the *Industrial Commodity Statistics Yearbook 2005* will be the first publication to feature the revised product list.

E. Statistics on index numbers of industrial production

17. The data collection programme on index numbers of industrial production, i.e. the collection of volume indices, continues to be one of the key components of industrial statistics of the United Nations Statistics Division. The United Nations Statistics Division has started the conversion of the existing index number series, currently using 1995 as a base year, to using 2000 as the new base year.

18. The United Nations Statistics Division is also engaged in a review to explore enlarging the scope of the data collection on index numbers to service industries.

F. Future work

19. The United Nations Statistics Division will engage in a review and discussions with the United Nations Industrial Development Organization to explore how the industrial statistics data currently collected by both agencies can be better integrated to provide a comprehensive data set describing industrial production and providing a better and more streamlined tool for data users.

20. Regional initiatives have emerged that work towards a harmonization of industrial statistics, particularly for manufacturing. In East Asia, a project covering the countries of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, China, Japan and the Republic of Korea has been started to increase comparability of industrial statistics between participating countries, adhering to international standards and classifications. The project aims at comparability at the 3- and 4-digit level of ISIC (possibly amended by a regional adaptation of the classification), exceeding the comparability target formulated by the Statistical Commission in 2006 during the adoption of ISIC.

21. Experiences of this regional effort will be studied and may serve as guidelines for other regions planning to engage in similar exercises.